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Carol X Weakley 11/07/2006 02:15:14 PM From DB/Inbox: Carol X Weakley

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Text:

UNCLAS TEL AVIV 04398

SIPDIS
CXTela:
ACTION: CONS
INFO: POL DCM

DISSEMINATION: CONS
CHARGE: PROG

APPROVED: AMB:RHJONES
DRAFTED: POL:MJSIEVERS
CLEARED: NONE

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PP RUEHC RUEHAM RUEHEG RUEHJM
DE RUEHTV #4398 3071704
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7406
INFO RUEHAM/AMEMBASSY AMMAN PRIORITY 0991
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY 8788
RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM PRIORITY 4934

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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A
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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR RAISES TREATMENT OF AMCITS WITH MFA
DIRECTOR GENERAL ABRAMOVITCH

1. (SBU) The Ambassador raised reports of GOI mistreatment of American citizens during a working lunch October 31 with MFA Director General Aharon Abramovitch and Deputy Director General for North America Yoram Ben Zeev. The Ambassador noted that we had two separate types of concerns: a change in the way the Israeli Ministry of Interior was handling requests by Amcits residing in the West Bank to renew their visas, as well as an increase in complaints by Amcits about mistreatment at Ben Gurion Airport. As an example, the Ambassador cited the case of a U.S. military doctor departing Israel after attending an exchange program who had been harassed and had his camera broken by Ben Gurion security personnel October 30.

2. (SBU) The Ambassador said we knew the Attorney General had recently advised the Minister of Interior that the GOI more strictly enforce regulations on renewing three-month tourist visas for Amcits, many but not all of them of Palestinian origin, who reside in the West Bank. Since the GOI would not grant these Amcits residency, the Ambassador explained, in the past they were forced to enter Israel on three month tourist visas, which they had heretofore been able to renew without a problem. Since the Attorney General's recommendation last spring, however, the U.S. Consulate General in Jerusalem estimated that the GOI had denied about 200 Amcits' requests to renew their visas. The Ambassador said we could understand the Attorney General's desire to enforce Israeli laws and regulations, but if the problem was concern that Americans were working and residing in the West Bank on tourist visas, the answer should be to give them a mechanism to establish legal residence. Many of these Amcits have been living in the West Bank for years and had families or businesses that created jobs for Palestinians. They were part of the solution, not part of

the problem.

¶3. (SBU) Regarding the Amcit residents, Abramovitch said he had met with the Director General of the Ministry of Interior, and was planning meetings with the Ministry of Justice and security services to discuss the issue. Abramovitch stressed that the GOI had changed the implementation of existing regulations, but had not issued new regulations. Abramovitch said he thought it would be a good idea for the Ambassador to raise the issue with Minister of Interior Bar On as well. Meanwhile, he would continue to work the interagency process to find a practical solution.

¶4. (SBU) On the airport harassment issue, the Ambassador told Abramovitch and Ben Zeev that the Embassy had an obligation to inform American citizens if we believe they may face problems at Ben Gurion Airport. Washington may therefore consider changing our travel warning. Ben Zeev told the Ambassador that the MFA consular department maintained a 24-hour operations center as well as an MFA official at the airport. Until MFA had time to develop a more permanent solution, Ben Zeev said the Embassy should contact his deputy, Dan Arbell, any time there was a problem at Ben Gurion and Arbell would call the MFA's official at the airport to intervene in order to resolve the problem. The Ambassador thanked Abramovitch and Ben Zeev for their efforts to improve the situation, noting that the mistreatment of American citizens by Israel was already being reported in the U.S. media.

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JONES